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Verses

By

Geneva V. Wolcott

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

—*Omar.*

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Requiescant in
Anna T. Talcott







Verses



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The Holy Nativity.

HO! in a grotto at Bethlehem,
Bearing nor sceptre nor diadem,
He, whom the world has waited long,
Comes amid bursts of song!

Glory to God in the Highest be!
Peace and good will unto men brings He.
While the world stands it shall never cease,
For He is the Prince of Peace!

Mother and Son in the cavern lay
On the morn of the world's first Christmas day,
While angels and men prolong the cry—
“Glory to God on High!”

Still is the world with united voice
Singing, “The King is Come, Rejoice!”
Ever and ever on Christmas morn
Shout we, “The Christ is Born!”

Katydid.

SAY, what is this awful thing that Katy did—
That all the pale green members of her class
Tell it in early autumn—
(Don't deny it for I've caught 'em)
Telling all who chance along the road to pass?

Why, it must have been a very grave offense,
That the gossips tell about it every night;
Did she murder—did she steal
That her bosom friends all feel
It their duty to inform,—or is it spite?

Why does she not her good name vindicate?
Has she not recourse to the legal court?
It really seems a shame
To advertise her name,
And nightly spread the scandalous report.

The winter's coming on to hush it up,
And all this tree-top scandal to forbid;
There is not the least redress
For poor Katy in distress—
Still nobody seems to know what Katy did.

My Claim.

I want a kindly word at times—
A pat upon the back;
A smile, a cheer, a helping hand
To keep me in the track.

I crave my modicum of love,
A kiss upon the brow;
Withhold them not until I'm dead,
For oh, I need them now.

The Quest.

I sat alone in the flickering light
Of the embers' dying glow;
My head fell forward upon my breast
And I slept for an hour or so.
I slept and dreamed I sent my soul
Through Olympus' hallowed gate,
To ask of the gods their mystic charm
That mortals might emulate.
I said to my soul: "To Apollo go,
And pray him impart to thee
The secret of music—the choicest songs—
The essence of melody."
Apollo caressingly touched his lyre,
In response to my soul's request,
And sang as one with heart afire—
"Old songs are best! Old songs are best!
By all the gods, are best!"

My soul passed on, and at Bacchus' shrine
Faltered as one in fear.
"Hic—waz wilt have—hic—wandering soul?"
He cried with a maudlin leer.
"I fear you cannot assist me, sir:"
Said my soul in tones distressed,

But Bacchus croaked in unsteady voice—
“Old wine is best! Hic—wine is best!
By all—hic—gods, is best!”

My soul through Olympian paths still strayed,
In search of life's best store—
When like a wraith from out the past
Came a sweetheart of years before.
Just then Dan Cupid fluttered by,
In a pair of gauze wings drest;
And sang with voice like a summer sigh—
“Old love is best! Old love is best!
By all the gods, is best!”

The gods of war, the gods of peace,
Of music, of love, of wine,
Could not for another hour detain
This truant soul of mine.
The fire had died, the room grown chill—
I sprang from my chair with a start;
I fancied I heard in the gathering gloom
The voice of my old sweetheart.
And my soul well knows the song she sings—
My soul returned from the quest;
'Tis the song of the god with gossamer wings—
“Old love is best! Old love is best!
By all the gods, is best!”

My Wish.

BUT this I ask—
That you and I may sometime, somewhere
meet;

Not among crowds that throng the busy street—
Not at the dance, amid the measured strain,
Where hands are clasped and revelry doth
reign—
That were a task.

I fondly hope
That sometime, when the rashly spoken word
Has lost its sting (would, dear, you had not
heard)—
And naught but love and peace and gentleness
Hold sway, our mended lives to comfort and to
bless—
The gates shall ope,

And you and I
Shall pass beyond the reach of cankering care,
Into that realm, sometime, somewhere,
Far from the world's vain show and dizzy
swirl—
Where the peace angel shall his wings unfurl;—
For this I sigh.

Winter Nights.

WHO says the winter nights are long and dreary?

I'll wager 'tis some long-faced pessimist;
Some fellow who of life has grown weary;
Such people do not live, they just exist.

The winter nights are merry as a May day;
A cozy room, a roaring, crackling fire,
A tempting couch, a nest of downy pillows,
A bookcase filled: what more could one desire?

The Bard of Avon nestling in my bookshelves
So tempting is, I really can't resist:
Keats, Browning, Burns, dear, grim old Victor
Hugo,
And Twain, the merry, jovial humorist.

With dear old faithful leather-bound compan-
ions,
And winter nights that all too quickly fly,
Who would for summer wish, or change condi-
tions
With millionaire or emperor? Not I.

Across the Chasm.

YES, dear one, I would fain obey thy call;—
Gladly my head would pillow on thy breast;
Patient and loving, I would be thy all,
For thee I'd to the dregs drink of life's gall;
But the decree is sealed! Love, it is best;
Thou hast thy lot in life, and I have mine;
Our hands may touch in greeting—ne'er our lips.
The sweetness that the meanest creature sips
Is not for thee and me. No nectared wine
Of Love's distilling shall we ever quaff.—
At our abstaining let the cold world laugh;
God knows our hearts; why then should we re-
pine?
My soul is linked with fetters unto thine,
And all the powers of earth can not divide
The pure affection of two fond hearts tried.

If I Were a King.

IF I were a king, I'd laugh and sing;
I'd wine and I'd dine and I'd have my fling—
I'd revel and dance till the world should ring
 With the sound of my revelry!

If you were a king, you'd do no such thing.
You'd tremble and quake at the muttering
Of subjects whose cries through the world would
 ring
 With complaints of your tyranny.

With a cumbersome crown on your aching head—
By a mounted guard to your pastimes led—
Attended you'd go to your royal bed
 O'erhung with a cloth of gold.
Purple and ermine and linens fair—
The weight of which would your body bear—
A sceptre gleaming with jewels rare
 Your trembling hand would hold.

Between the draughts of Your Majesty's wine,
You'd sigh for a life as free as mine,
And wish you were not by right divine,
 "Aye, every inch a king!"
So change your boast to a thankful prayer
That you breathe, unfettered, God's free pure air.
Go on your way, gay, debonair,
 And so you shall have your fling.

The Rose and the Thorn.

ONLY a rose!
Its flushed petals disclose
A soft breath of fragrance like incense ascend-
ing.
It lives but a day,
Then fading away
Leaves behind scented memories, sweet and un-
ending.

Only a thorn!
On the rose stem 'tis born;
The hand that would pluck it is wounded and
bleeding.
What use to cry?
'Twill heal bye and bye;
For the sake of the rose, pass the thorn prick
unheeding.

In Spring.

HEEPING up from their bed of earth—
Eager to hear the songs of mirth
That burst from a thousand throats,
Are tiny violets of royal hue,
And pale forget-me-nots, dainty blue—
Called forth by sweet song birds' notes.

"Awake!" cries the robin, at early dawn;
"Get up, for the morning is hastening on,
And flowers should not lie asleep!
Don't you hear my mate calling back to me
From the topmost bough of yon budding tree,
With her dutiful 'cheep, cheep, cheep'?"

So the violet vies with her sister flowers,
To rise in the springtime's early hours
At Sir Robin Redbreast's call;
And soon the woodland is wide awake;
Flowers bloom for the dear sweet springtime's
sake,
And the bird choirs sing for all.

Come listen, dear heart, to the melody
Of the birds as they flit from tree to tree—
'Tis the homage they pay to Spring;
Be soothed by the violets' subtle scent,
And cheered by the birds' accompaniment,
Thank God for the joy they bring.

Unfaith.

HE broke home ties and he broke home hearts,
All for a woman's smile;
She flattered his vanity, laughed in her sleeve
At the lies and deceits she had made him believe—
He singeing his wings the while.

He was a youth, and the world had not
Opened his eyes as yet;
Like his mother, all women were sweet and
pure—
He had never been called upon to endure
At the hands of a vain coquette

The cruel torture, the living death
That many a man has felt,
When once he craved a woman's love
And at her altar knelt.

So the youth lived on in a paradise—
In the light of her fiendish smile;
But the scales at last fell from his eyes—
He was frenzied and numbed with a wild sur-
prise,
When he found her naught but guile.

His idol was crashed from its pedestal,
And in its place remains



Only the memory of a face—
Paradise for a short, sweet space—
And womankind bathed in stains.

Do you wonder then at the death of faith—
The first fond faith of youth?
Have you blame for him who in woman sees
Not a single atom of truth?

You may shrug your shoulders, and wink and
nod,
In the same old worldly style;
But you'll never know the cruel strife,
Till you give the best of your heart and life
For a faithless woman's smile.

A Lesson.

A bird beneath my window sang;
And as his carol clearly rang
Upon the morning air,
I paused with bated breath, to hear
Him chant his hymn of praise so clear—
His hymn—a prayer.

A prayer of love and gratitude,
For mate, and nest, and daily food,
And life and light.
It sang to Him who hears each call,
Who marks the tiny sparrow's fall,
And knows its flight.

And as upon my window sill
(That he might sing, and eat his fill)
I placed a crumb,
I said: "Shall he, my songster, pray
And praise in joyous roundelay,
And I be dumb?"

Lord, grant that I, too, may rejoice
With heart and soul; may raise my voice
To render praise
To Thee, who with unerring hand,
Doth guide us in this desert land,
Through devious ways.

Wanderers.

YOU ask my habitation—
Ah, me, I can not tell!
Where'er my heart finds lodgment,
'Tis there I dwell.

Oftimes among the flowers
My heart astraying goes;
If my abode you're seeking,
Look to the rose.

When shrieks of merry laughter
Make glad the playtime hour,
My heart and I are living
In childhood's bower.

Should soft, sweet strains of music
My listening heart beguile,
Within its dulcet confines
We dwell the while.

But when the roses wither,
And music's melody
Is hushed; when turned to silence
Is childish glee—

Where then, my boon companion,
Shall we, the rovers, dwell?
“In heaven,” a soft voice whispers.—
Thou answerest well.

Not a Question of Color.

EYES reflecting heaven's blue
Are invariably true—
At least so I've heard;
And I've heard that eyes of grey
Love but for a fleeting day;—
That is quite absurd!

Eyes—no matter what their hue—
Whether hazel, brown or blue,
Oftentimes conceal
Fond emotions of the heart—
Far too sacred to impart,
Or carelessly reveal.

I've a pair of eyes in mind—
Sometimes laughing—always kind—
Never, never dim;
What I see reflected there
You should neither know nor care,
What are you to him?

If those eyes the brighter grow
When they look in mine, I know
Mine grow brighter, too.
So what matters it, I say
Whether they be blue or grey,
If his heart be true?

Lines to a Friend at College.

“**(U)** FT in the stilly night, ere slumber’s
chains have bound thee”—

Sit thou before thy grate and wrap thy bathrobe
’round thee.

Watch in the flickering blaze each ghoulish dance
and antic—

Fantastic revels of the burning logs, weird, devil-
ish and frantic.

Call to thy memory’s aid each little firelight
fairy—

Name them (for auld lang syne) Lucille, Geneva,
Mary.

Picture the yester-years before that tyrant
Knowledge

Claimed thy attention, sir, and sent thee off to
college.

Time, space and all things else, bid that I be la-
conic,

Still must I say to thee, in Friendship’s name
(Platonic)—

“Oft in the stilly night” when thou art weary—
very—

Picture (for auld lang syne) Lucille, Geneva,
Mary.

My Heart and I.

MY heart broke away from its fetters one day,
And sought the green fields of delight.
It forded the streams
In the dim land of dreams,
With never a sorrow to blight.

It sang in its glee, so glad to be free—
It danced to the brook's happy tune;
The blue sky o'erhead
Like a canopy spread—
Like a carpet the greensward of June.

How vain and how short are the pleasures we
 court;
How quickly the blown roses fade;
The goblet of youth,
How soon emptied, forsooth,
The day, how soon lost in night's shade!

My heart wandered back to the worn, beaten
 track,
And wearily plodded along.
We are happier so,

Tho' the measure be slow—
For life is not always in song.

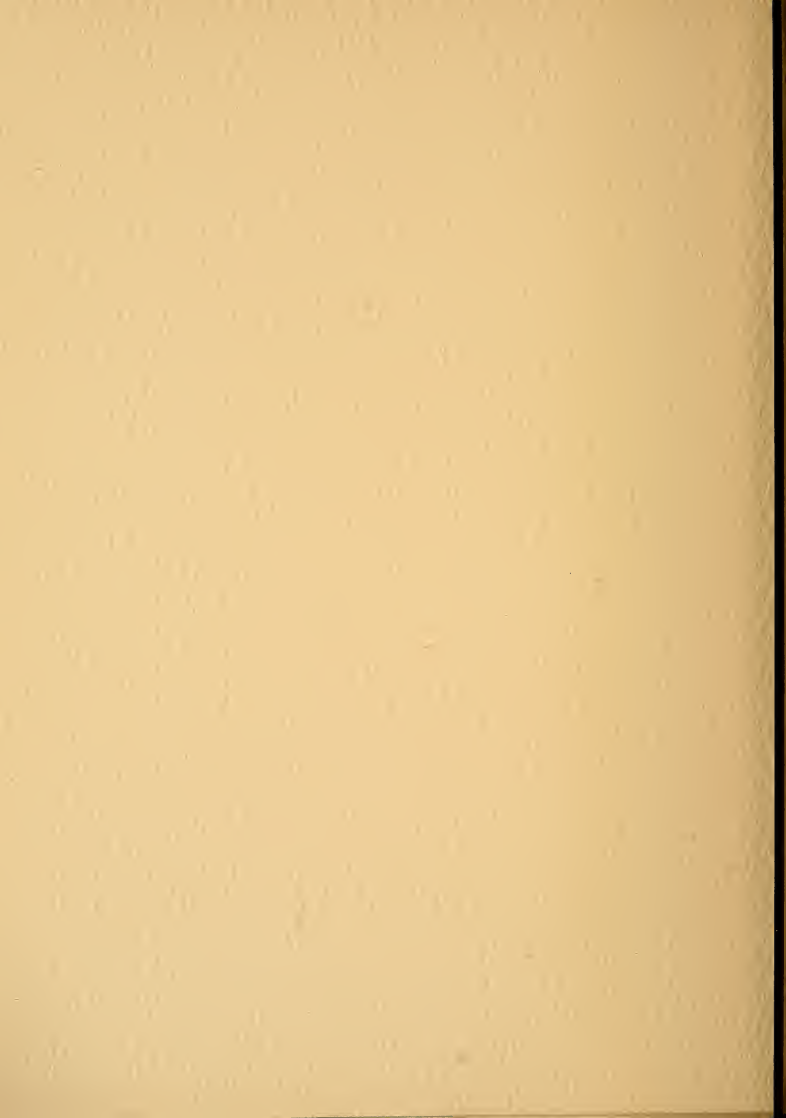
There is work to be done; there are crowns to be
won;

There are crosses to carry each day.

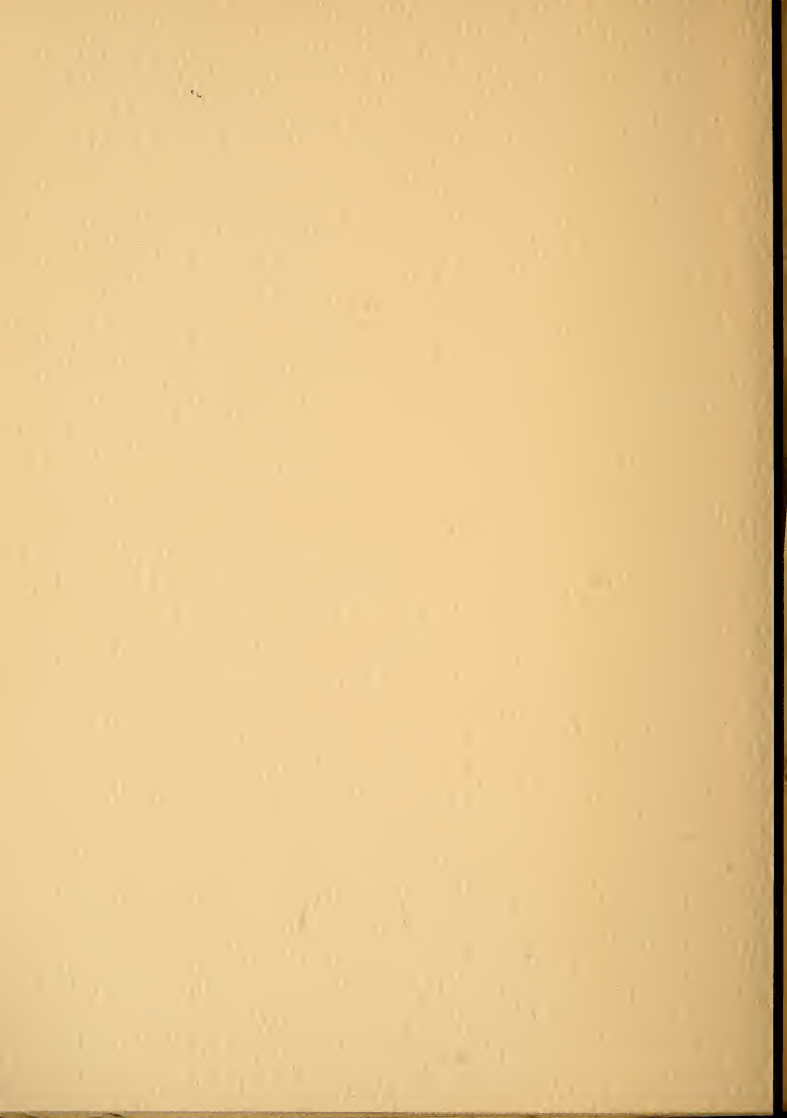
My tired heart and I

For the guerdon will try,

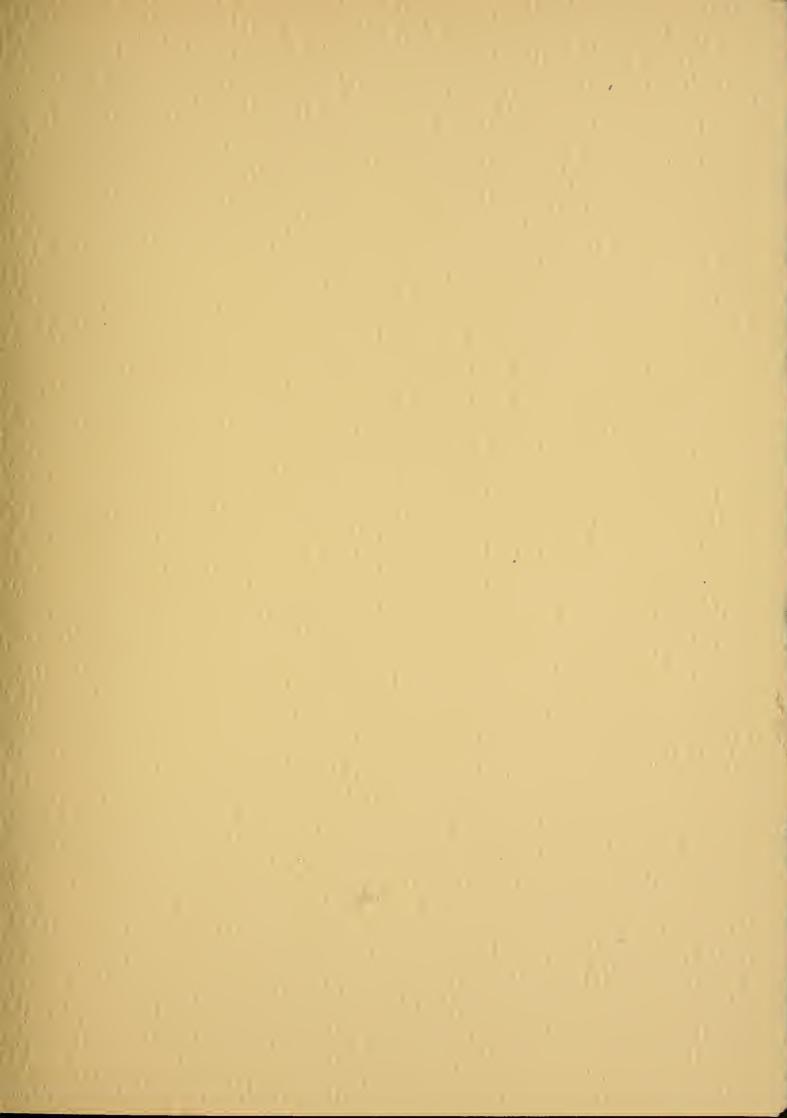
Tho' we falter and faint by the way.



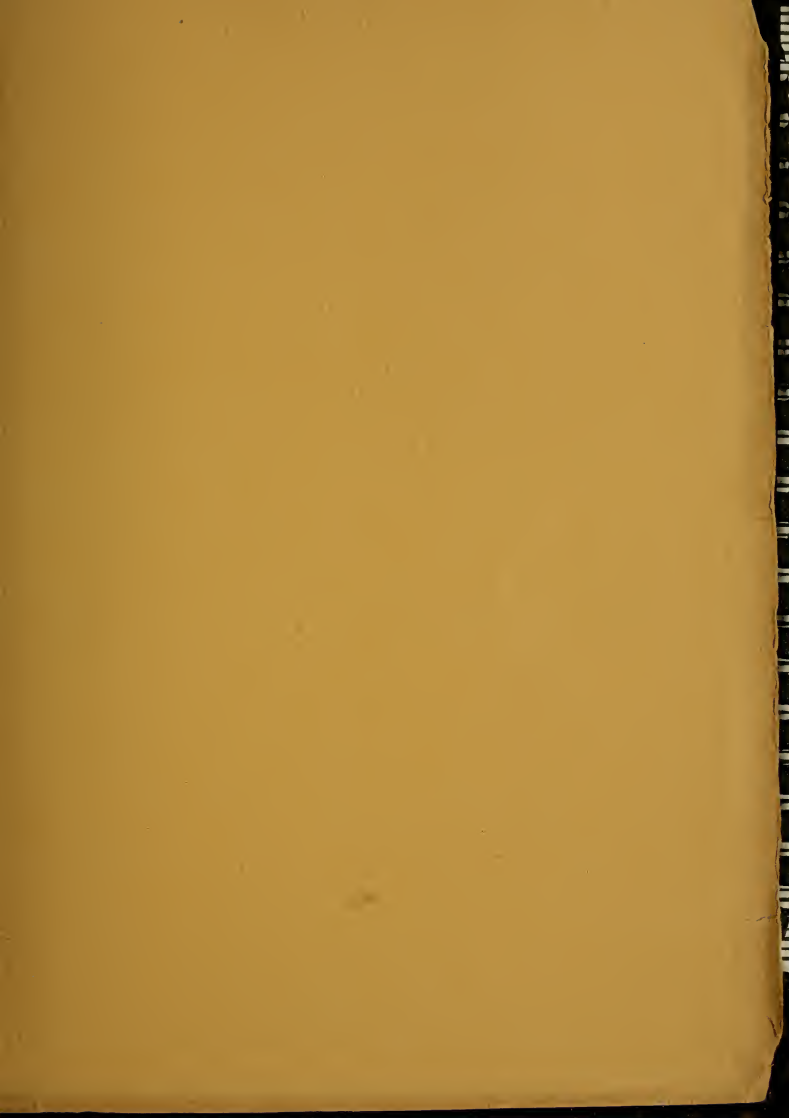












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